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*The Voice of the Connecticut Forest Products Industry*

March 13, 2011

**Testimony in support of:**

**H.B. 5363: AN ACT TRANSFERRING THE CONSERVATION FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Submitted by: Joan Nichols – President CT Professional Timber Producers Association, Inc.

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Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and members of the Environment Committee:

The Connecticut Professional Timber Producers Association strongly urges your support of H.B. 5363. Forestry is an agricultural activity as defined under CGS 1-1q and yet it is the only agricultural activity that is not under the jurisdiction of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Forestry has all of the similarities of any of the other commodity based agricultural products. It is land based and consumer driven. The majority of the over 500 Certified Forest Practitioners certified by the state of Connecticut are small family owned operations as are all of the sawmills in the state. The sometimes overly burdensome regulatory nature of the Department of Environmental Protection has not served forestry or the forest products industry well since forestry was incorporated into the CT DEP in the early 1970s.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture works exceedingly well with producers with a common goal of making Connecticut agriculture the best that it could be. Forestry, which more closely parallels all of the other agricultural commodities, has been lost within the bureaucracy of the CT DEP. In December 2010, Connecticut forest products was incorporated in the Department of Agriculture's CT Grown Program. Tree farming is not just Christmas trees. It is the management and harvest of trees, as a crop, on a sustainable basis. Historically, sawmills, logging and firewood operations have been farm based or value-added enterprises to the farming operation especially to subsidize farm income in the winter months.

Forestry *is* part of agriculture and should be treated as such by an agency that understands agriculture.